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Mr Ray Watson
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Watson

Short inspection of Filby Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Filby Primary is a small, nurturing school. Leaders and teachers are working together successfully to meet the identified school priorities that serve to improve pupils' outcomes. School leaders and the trust are passionate about the school's profile within the community. Although hindered by the unexpected closure of the local nursery, which resulted in a fall in pupil numbers, leaders have made great strides in attracting pupils to the school and, consequently, the number of pupils is steadily increasing.

Governors share your vision to increase pupil numbers further to full capacity. Furthermore, governors challenge leaders effectively about safeguarding, spending of the pupil premium funding, and the quality of teaching and learning. This ensures that the provision at Filby is sustaining the good standard of education for all children and pupils.

Pupils are polite, happy and welcoming to visitors. They told me they love the fact that all the teachers know them well and that teachers are approachable. Parents and pupils speak highly of school leadership. Pupils said, 'Mr Watson is very understanding if you have a problem.' Parents that I spoke to on the playground agreed you and your staff are friendly and welcoming.

Children in the early years are confident, happy and settled. Teachers plan for

children to experience a range of activities to develop skills across all areas of learning. They access resources independently, work well with each other and interact positively with adults. Investigating and exploring are fundamental to the children's teaching and learning and run through the Reception class. Children experience many outdoor activities, including planting seeds and bulbs. Teachers extend the outdoor learning across a range of activities and areas of learning. They plan interesting ways to engage children in understanding the world while also developing their ability to hold and use objects. For example, I observed children using a knife and fork to cut through the prickly shell of a conker, and using tweezers to remove the seeds from a sunflower.

Children focus on their tasks and can explain what they are doing. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development consistently exceeds national expectations over time and you expect this to be the case in the validated outcomes for 2017. Additionally, children make good and better progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their varying starting points. This means that at the end of Reception, children are ready for Year 1.

Pupils in Year 1 have achieved above the national averages in the phonics screening checks over the last two years and a higher proportion are likely to achieve above the national average at the end of 2017. The school's attainment information for the end of key stage 1 indicates that pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are expected again to be above national averages.

You have already established your small school at the heart of the community, involving residents in school events and taking part in community projects such as 'Filby in Bloom', an important project in the village.

Parents are hugely positive about the school. One parent commented, 'I would wholeheartedly recommend this school to other parents and am so pleased I chose it for my own children.' The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that the necessary checks are made on all staff prior to them taking up their appointments. Any concerns about pupils are raised immediately and all staff are acutely aware of monitoring changes in pupils' behaviour.

You do your utmost to keep fully informed about safeguarding practice by attending safeguarding clusters at a local school. You have found these to be invaluable for securing your knowledge and informing your own practice on how to keep vulnerable pupils safe.

Pupils said they feel safe at school and could explain why. They have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and know that the school is a safe place. Pupils can confidently talk about internet safety. They are able to explain some of

the dangers and know what to do if they are contacted by a stranger while online.

All parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire said they agreed that their children are safe at school and pupils are well behaved. One parent commented, 'The school includes all children in communications and reacts quickly to anything raised.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry looked at what leaders' plans were for raising achievement in English in key stage 2. This was because the 2016 information showed that, although there were small pupil numbers, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and grammar at the end of Year 6 was slightly below the national average. The school's 2017 information shows that, although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard may be below the national average, reading, writing and grammar attainment are likely to have improved since 2016. You had already recognised that there were some gaps in pupils' learning that had an adverse effect on pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage assessments. Additionally, you had set as a priority in your school development plan that pupils needed to make more progress, as you had also identified that too few pupils were reaching the higher standards of attainment in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' workbooks from 2016/17 across key stage 2 show that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing across the school. Grammar is being taught regularly, with opportunities to apply skills across a range of writing genres. Pupils' writing shows effective use of punctuation and national curriculum spellings are taught and applied throughout their work.
- Leaders responsible for reading and writing have ensured that closing gaps in pupils' learning is a key focus in the whole-school curriculum. They have worked alongside the trust's experienced coaching team and have carried out an analysis to identify areas which pupils find challenging. Curriculum leaders have revised the school's curriculum planning to ensure that all reading and writing skills are covered in other curriculum areas and not solely in English lessons.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-aged groups and teachers ensure that there are consistency and progression in the quality of teaching and learning. On the day of the inspection, it was evident that grammar was a key focus within lessons. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge in the teaching and learning of writing and grammar skills. Pupils write for a number of different purposes and increasingly write in other curriculum subjects. For example, in history, pupils were planning to write a diary from the perspective of an Ancient Egyptian. It was evident that pupils were knowledgeable about different types of writing and pupils in Year 3 were able to explain the features of diary writing. In the lessons observed, pupils were motivated, confident and challenged, and their outcomes were good.
- My second line of enquiry looked at how teachers challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to make the progress they should. This is because in 2016 too few

pupils reached the higher standard of achievement in English and mathematics.

- The school's pupil-progress information is robust and regular meetings identify pupils who need to be challenged further. You and your leaders' monitoring identifies that teachers are now far more skilful at moving pupils on from their starting points so that they make the necessary progress. This is because you have secured high-quality training that is being applied well by staff.
- In lessons, all pupils have the opportunity to access a 'challenge' area that provides them with different tasks that test their understanding further. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, different activities ensured that pupils were challenged from their individual starting points. Pupils were keen to share their learning and were motivated to move on to the more challenging tasks. Pupils demonstrated this when some went from using a number line to using mental strategies to complete calculations. Those needing extra help were being effectively supported by an additional adult and the most able pupils were working independently.
- Additionally, in a Year 5 and 6 lesson on rounding tens of thousands, the teacher assessed pupils' knowledge at the start so that pupils could be matched to an appropriate task. Pupils enjoy being challenged and are eager to show that they are ready to move on, thus successfully deepening their learning.
- My final line of enquiry wanted to explore how well leaders are being supported by the academy trust to improve pupils' outcomes further. You have established a good working relationship with the trust, which has effectively supported the school through challenging times. You have made good use of the resources the trust has to offer. The central coaching team has worked with leaders to support and develop their roles in English and mathematics. Teachers also share best practice across schools to develop further their subject knowledge. Your close monitoring show this is having a positive impact on the consistency of teaching and learning in English and mathematics across the school. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work, ensuring that future planning meets the needs of all pupils either by addressing pupils' misunderstanding or by challenging them further.
- The trust is well aware of the vulnerabilities that come with being a small school. It shares the vision of school leaders and is effectively supporting the school to promote itself in the wider community. This is proving successful, as pupils are now travelling from outside the village to attend the school for its nurturing and supportive reputation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to secure reading and writing skills across the curriculum
- teachers consistently challenge all pupils so that a greater proportion of pupils across the school reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff, two members of the school advisory improvement group and a member of the academy trust. I also spoke with parents.
- I visited all classes. Last year's examples of pupils' work were scrutinised. I spoke with pupils about their work and observed pupils' behaviour during activities and as they moved around the classes.
- A number of documents were reviewed, including the single central record of employment checks, the school's self-evaluation, governors' minutes, and pupils' assessment and progress information.
- I also took account of the 18 responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 18 text messages from parents, and seven responses to the Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.